

THE POETIC-PHILOSOPHICAL EXPERIENCES OF FERNANDO PESSOA AND THE NON-PHILOSOPHY OF ALBERTO CAEIRO¹

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RESUMO: À medida que prioriza a existência, as experiências expressas nos poemas de Caeiro encontram eco na filosofia fenomenológica. Nesse contexto, Renaud Barbaras apresenta uma leitura profunda e original da obra caeriana, ao pensá-la a partir de problemas frequentados sobretudo pela fenomenologia de Merleau-Ponty. Com efeito, no ensaio *Fenomenologia e Literatura: a não filosofia de Fernando Pessoa*, Barbaras revela como as experiências cultivadas nos poemas que integram a obra de Caeiro vão além de determinadas soluções ensaiadas pelo filósofo francês, e configuram uma perspectiva radical sobre o pensamento e a existência, que pode e deve ser considerada pela filosofia. Ao abordar o pensamento poético-filosófico de Pessoa, e a leitura que Barbaras faz da poesia de Caeiro, este ensaio tratará do diálogo entre os discursos poético e filosófico, buscando mostrar como o poético pode ser um espaço privilegiado para o desenvolvimento de experiências de teor filosófico que excedem e, todavia, compõem a filosofia.

Palavras chave: fenomenologia, poética, não-filosofia, Pessoa, Merleau-Ponty, Barbaras.

ABSTRACT: By centering on existence, the experiences expressed in Caeiro's poems reverberate in phenomenological philosophy. In this context, Renaud Barbaras presents a deep and original reading of the Caerian corpus by approaching it from problems that had been explored by Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology. In his essay *Fenomenologia e Literatura: a não filosofia de Fernando Pessoa*, Barbaras shows how the experiences in the poems of Caeiro transcend certain solutions that had been developed by the French philosopher, leading to a radical perspective on thought and existence, which can and should be explored by philosophy. By approaching the poetic-philosophical thought of Pessoa and Barbaras's reading of Caeiro's poetry, this essay explores the dialogue between the poetic and philosophical discourses, showing how the poetic can also be a privileged setting for the development of philosophical experiences that exceed, while also make, philosophy.

Keywords: phenomenology, poetics; non-philosophy, Pessoa, Merleau-Ponty, Barbaras.

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And everything is what it is, second by second, illuminated with life. I suddenly look away not to see each thing fix in its appearance and die. Only in this way can I remain alive, reborn every second and forbidding the thought to start working again, reopening from the inside the emptiness of your vain constructions.

Pirandello. *Um, nenhum e cem mil*

I.

The following verses can be found in poem XXVII of *The Keeper of Sheep* by Alberto Caeiro: “Blessed am I for all I don’t know./ That 's all I truly am...” (PESSOA, 2006, p. 30). We know Caeiro is one of the three heteronyms² that are part of the Pessoa universe; it is not the younger nor the older, but had the briefest life: born in 1889 and dead by 1915 as a result of tuberculosis. Caeiro lived much of his life in the countryside, his socioeconomic condition was low, he visited few places, and had little access to formal education. He never had any public recognition in life but was nonetheless considered to be a master not only by the heteronyms of Álvaro de Campos and Ricardo Reis, and by the heteronymous personality of Antonio Mora, but also by the demiurge himself, Fernando Pessoa. Today, besides a number of studies on the consequences of his existence for the Pessoa universe and his repercussions in literary studies, the Caerian corpus has been increasingly studied in philosophical circles. However, according to the verses that open the present essay, these facts add little to Caeiro’s true being, since his most inner condition, his most authentic existence appears through the denial of the artifices of knowledge (or at least a certain form of knowledge). But, after all, what can the experience described in these two verses, which radically dissociate being from knowledge, can tell us about Caeiro, the Pessoa universe, and the dialogue between the poetic and the philosophical, the main subject of this article?

II.

Approached in different ways by each inhabitant of the Pessoa universe, the discussion around the tensions between existence and consciousness, or being and knowledge, can be

² In his *Tábua Bibliográfica*, Pessoa writes: “The heteronymic works of Fernando Pessoa have been done by three names of people - Alberto Caeiro, Ricardo Reis, Álvaro de Campos. These individualities must be considered as different from their author. Each of them forms a sort of drama; and all of them together form another drama” (PESSOA, 1993, p. 250). Besides his three heteronyms, the Pessoa universe is inhabited by the orthonym Pessoa, which are: the figure of Pessoa himself inside this universe; the various heteronymic personalities (possibly more than seventy); and by the semi-heteronym Bernardo Soares, who is not an heteronym, neither orthonym Pessoa, nor a heteronymic personality, at the same time that is is a little of all this.

found throughout its domains. On the one hand, for example, we find a radical thought experiment in *Fausto, tragédia subjetiva* that leads its protagonist to the vertiginous exploration of the possibilities of consciousness, reaching its most abyssal places: “The Conscience of existing, suffering/First and last of reasoning/that, however, raised by her, does not hit her/The Conscience of existing crushes me/With all its mystery and power/Of a deep comprehended incomprehension” (PESSOA, 1991, p. 53). He is aware of the original inscrutability of existence, but the hypertrophy of Faust’s consciousness does not allow him to simply accept the inevitability of existence. By privileging knowledge before existence, the inquisitive force of his intellect stays with him³: “I drank the glass... of thought/ Until the end; I thus recognized it/ It was empty and I found horror. Mas I drank it/ I reasoned until I found truth/ I found it and do not understand it./ (...) I go from the limited and relative/ A world in which I carry the burden of my thinking” (PESSOA, 1991, p. 166). On the other hand, when facing this tension, Alberto Caeiro will privilege existence. His choice, however, does not lead to the end of the exercise of consciousness or knowledge. He is instead interested in reaffirming the place of the latter in face of existence: “We live before we philosophize, we exist before we know it./ And the first fact deserves at least the precedent and worship./ Yes, before we are interior, we are exterior./ This is why we essentially are exterior” (PESSOA, 2005, p. 120). It is the master heteronym who will clean existence from the superfluous apparatus that the speculative consciousness put on it:

To clean up Matter/ To replace it for the things that men have messed up/
Because they did not understand their function/ To straighten them up, as a
good housewife of Reality,/ The curtains in the windows of Sensation/ And
the rugs at the doors of Perception/ To sweep the bedrooms of Observation/
and to clean up the dust of simple ideas.../ This is my life, verse by verse.
(PESSOA, 2005, p. 86)

³ The speculative rage of Faust will lead him to a radical experience of consciousness when trying to make it coincide with himself. Similarly to Husserl’s transcendental reduction, Fausto also finds the emptiness that comes with this radical experience of thought that looks at itself: “Today no image, no figure/I evoke in myself... only a desert where/ not the color of sand, nor a dead air/ I can dream... but only having the idea/ Having only the color of the thought,/ Empty, hollow, neither warm, nor cold,/ Without a position, nor direction (...)/ Only the emptiness of thought” (PESSOA, 1991, p. 10). In this sense, Carlos Felipe Moisés writes about this experience in the work of Pessoa: “[He] guides thought to the supreme rarefaction of its object, projecting it on the atmosphere of ‘transcendental reflection’, mentioned by Husserl, in which thought becomes the object of itself, to find that which was always there: the originary patency of nothingness” (MOISÉS, 1999, p. 71). Kujawski also writes about this coincidence: “We can see how Fernando Pessoa, in his fever of lucidity, was close to pure phenomenological consciousness around the same time that phenomenology was becoming more popular with the work of Husserl” (KUJAWSKI, 1967, p. 53).

By focusing on existence, the experiences expressed in the poems of Caeiro resemble phenomenological philosophy. More than an echo, as discussed later, the poetic horizon will become a privileged space for the development of this theme. In this context, Renaud Barbaras offers a deep and original reading of the Caerian corpus by thinking it especially through Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology. In the essay *Fenomenologia e Literatura: a não filosofia de Fernando Pessoa*, in the book *Investigações Fenomenológicas*, Barbaras shows how the experiences that are expressed in the work of Caeiro go beyond some of the solutions envisioned by the French philosopher, thus configuring a radical perspective on thought and existence that can and must be considered by Philosophy.

By emphasizing how Merleau-Ponty touches on the key point of the phenomenological philosophy since the first sentence of *The Visible and the Invisible*⁴, meaning: the existence as apparition, Renaud Barbaras shows the challenges faced by the French philosopher in his reflections. When dealing with the central question of phenomenology, i.e. the experience of existence, Merleau-Ponty discovers the difficulty of communicating the meaning of this experience that precedes language (thus a mute experience) through language itself.

The difficulty is thus to find a language that does not betray the meaning of presence, a language of the things themselves that is adequate to their silence. Therefore, it is important to note that the phenomenological project, as an effort to tackle the presence of the world, that is, of our perception, has to deal from the beginning with the problem of expression and, paradoxically, leads to a reflection about the role of language (BARBARAS, 2011, p. 214).

Discussing the terminological apparatus inherited from the philosophical tradition, such as the notions of subject/object or body/spirit, Merleau-Ponty has to deal with the double challenge of describing experiences that escape traditional concepts and categories of philosophy, while using those same terms, and at the same time build a critique of the traditional uses of this terminology: "He is in an uncomfortable situation since, far from being able to rely

⁴ This is the initial paragraph of *The Visible and the Invisible*: "We see the things themselves, the world is what we see: formulae of this kind express a faith common to the natural man and the philosopher—the moment he opens his eyes; they refer to a deep-seated set of mute "opinions" implicated in our lives. But what is strange about this faith is that if we seek to articulate it into theses or statements, if we ask ourselves what is this we, what seeing is, and what thing or world is, we enter into a labyrinth of difficulties and contradictions. " (MERLEAU-PONTY. 1968, p. 3)

on language, he must in a sense fight her all the time, try to make the structure of philosophical language less rigid, permanently criticize concepts that, however, he can not avoid using” (BARBARAS, 2011, p. 215). Barbaras notes that the changes that led Merleau-Ponty to choose the ontological approach came from his need to find a language capable of circumventing the difficulties that came with the philosophical use of language, which has been consolidated by the metaphysical tradition.⁵

In addition to the challenges of expression, we can also find a growing philosophical questioning of the exercise of philosophy itself. Such an investigation points to the need to radicalize philosophy, in an effort that could lead us into a domain that lies beyond philosophy, but that also makes it: an originary, pre-reflective place that precedes even language itself, the obscure background of philosophy. Besides a certain crisis of philosophy, which develops along with the critical reflections on its exercise, we can see the urgency of finding alternative ways of philosophizing that can remain close to this originary, pre-philosophical and mute world. In the words of Barbaras:

According to Merleau-Ponty, this thought that emerges in the field of philosophy, but also outside it, is not explicitly philosophy and even refuses such a label: it is a non-philosophy. Such is the manner through which Merleau-Ponty characterizes the unity of thought related to that which escapes metaphysical categories and precede them. The expression “non-philosophy” must be understood simultaneously as a negation of philosophy in the traditional or official sense, that is, as a critique to the categories of metaphysics, but also as a certain kind of philosophy (as indicated by the kept reference, albeit negative, to philosophy) that aims to tackle that which is not “philosophical”, or the obscure background on which it is embedded, to think the originary layer of existence that precedes any thought. Thus the non-philosophy is not an active and militant negation of philosophy for a positivist alternative, but a radicalization of philosophy that leads to its own boundary (BARBARAS, 2011, p. 217).

In his effort to create an ontology of totality capable of dealing with all aspects of Being, besides his traditional philosophical investigations, Merleau-Ponty will consider the exercise of this non-philosophy a form of interrogative ontology capable of approaching this non-

⁵ According to Barbaras: “In a sense the ontology of Merleau-Ponty is nothing but an effort to recreate a phenomenology of perception taking into consideration the obstacle of traditional language and, therefore, through the most adequate and necessarily new language. He write on a footnote of *The Visible and the Invisible* ‘the ontology would be development of the notions that must replace transcendental subjectivity, such as subject, object, meaning - a definition of philosophy would elucidate the philosophical expression itself” (BARBARAS, 2011, p. 215).

philosophical space, the basis of raw experiences that precede all thought. Aware that “The being is that demands from us creation so that we can have experience from him” (MERLEAU-PONTY, 2000, p. 187), he mainly focuses on artistic activities and pieces of art, since this is where the philosopher finds the development of Being as well as an expression of an encounter with this pre-reflective layer of raw meaning: “Well, art and, especially, painting have been made in this layer of raw meaning of which activism wants to know nothing. They are really the only ones to make it in all innocence” (MERLEAU-PONTY, 2004, p. 15)

According to the interpretation of Renaud Barbaras, the relationship between the Merleau-Pontian approach and art nonetheless still has elements of how the metaphysical tradition has considered art over time: as an object of speculation and exemplification. Although recognizing the radicality of artistic expression, Merleau Ponty did not fully admit the possibility of a philosophical autonomy of the works of art; the philosopher was still necessary to illuminate or articulate artistic expression so that it could reach a certain philosophical level. Artistic expression supposedly did not carry its own explanation with itself. “Art remains an object of reflection to the philosopher, and philosophy remains a form of aesthetics” (BARBARAS, 2011, p. 219). Merleau-Ponty did recognize that “metaphysics never stopped ‘having an illegal life’ in literature as a ‘metaphysics in act’” (BARBARAS, 2011, p. 219). But he still “kept a separation between literature and thought” (BARBARAS, 2011, p. 219). Barbaras argues that Merleau-Ponty is not the only one to blame since writers themselves have been too attached to the divisions between philosophical discourse and the more poetic uses of language.

III.

Unhappy with definitions that separated the poetic from the philosophical, Fernando Pessoa considered himself “a poet inspired by philosophy” (PESSOA, 2006a, p. 19). Through his work he overcame this separation, reflecting about the world, philosophy, and the experiences that were cultivated in his writings, ultimately considering the dialogue between poetic and philosophical discourses in an original way. Such an adventure allowed him to create his own universe, with singular inhabitants and even a recreation of the comprehension of himself based on the convivence with those presences. This original universe, however, which was capable of expressing, reflecting, and sustaining plural and powerful world perspectives,

was not born simply as a result of philosophical reflections, as if philosophical conscience preceded poetic creation and the latter was only an exemplification of the former. Although admitting to be *a poet inspired by philosophy*, Pessoa immediately stresses that: “he is not a philosopher with poetic qualities” (PESSOA, 2006a, p. 19). The philosophical nature of the Pessoaan work is closely related to the poetic dimension of his universe. In other words, the architecture of the poetic-philosophical thought of Pessoa was only possible because of the poetic foundation on which it is based.

One of the most striking poetic-philosophical experiences developed by the Portuguese poet is what I consider to be the basis of his work: disquiet. Pessoa’s work is marked by a plurality of meanings that can lead to multiple interpretations, but disquiet is not only the element that is at the center of the experiences in his writings, but also the basis of the original philosophical character of his poetic thought. The disquiet involved a radical investigation of existence and consciousness, something that can only be fully addressed through the possibilities offered by poetic experimentation. José Gil argues that:

The disquiet is below thought (...), before a name, before an idea. But it opens itself to beyond the antinomies, the ideas, the gods, the being, and the nothingness. The dissatisfaction of the disquiet reveals the impossibility of finding an ultimate foundation of existence because, when it is believed we have reached the last term, it makes us find another one, more distant, and as thinkable and, therefore, as justifiable as the first one. Neither God, nor gods, nor being, nor the non-being, nor existence, nor death are the ultimate foundations of the spirit, which, animated by the movement of life, of disquiet, breaks down all categories. The disquiet opens for the “Mystery”, the mystery of life, incomprehensible, unthinkable, only expressible through art (GIL, 1994, p. 29).

Operating as a sort of destabilizing vital power, the disquiet reveals itself in the incipient contingency that pushes man in his existence and speculations, in a permanently unfinished and unsatisfactory movement that, undefined, does not lead to any specific direction. Sensible to its reality, since he sees “disquiet at the bottom of all chalices” (PESSOA, 2002, p. 187), Pessoa identifies the impossibility of a concluding knowledge, sees mystery as a horizon, and establishes suspension as a conduct. However, such a suspension can not be reduced to the constant negation or ataraxy, instead pointing to a plural existence based on the possibility of creation. Such a context favored the birth of heteronym, which has its genesis and justification

in the command: “Be plural as the universe!” (PESSOA, 1990a, p. 41). The disquiet is not only a theme of the orthonym Pessoa and many of his heteronyms, as well as the high point of his investigations, but above all the element that pushed the author and his heteronyms, stimulating his speculations and creations. In the words of José Gil:

The disquiet is what therefore moves heteronymy. It is that movement of detachment of everything, and of the inconstancy the dissolves the ‘self’ in the heteronymic others-becoming. (...) While a movement of life, the disquiet does not have a direction, but takes all possible directions, without any goal other than itself, in its own free ‘expression’, as Pessoa says. If thought becomes entrenched in it, if it tries to impose a specific vector on it, then other contrary vectors emerge that stops the first one from fixing itself. Thus, paradoxically thought stimulates disquiet itself (...) [Thus], according to the strategies developed to adjust thought to life, disquiet takes different destinies: the tragic in Campos and Soares, stoic in Reis, melancholic in the orthonym Pessoa, peaceful in Caieiro (GIL, 1994, p. 26, 29 e 32).

By looking at heteronym as a consequence of disquiet we see that the latter not only questions structures of the world and existence, but also puts into doubt the subject of this experience. Heteronym in Pessoa established a de-subjectification followed by the polysemy of a self that goes through various relocations until it is impossible to see a division between his experiences and that which is experienced through the Other. On this process of de-subjectification, Agamben writes that:

in twentieth-century poetry, Pessoa's letter on heteronyms constitutes perhaps the most impressive document of desubjectification, the transformation of the poet into a pure 'experimentation ground' and its possible implications for ethics. (...) It is worth examining this incomparable phenomenology of heteronymic depersonalization. Not only does each new subjectification (the appearance of Alberto Caieiro) imply a desubjectification (the depersonalization of Fernando Pessoa, who submits himself to his teacher). At the same time, each desubjectification also implies a resubjectification: the return of Fernando Pessoa, who reacts to his non-existence, that is, to his depersonalization in Alberto Caieiro. It is as if the poetic experience constituted a complex process that involved at least three subjects - or rather, three different subjectifications-desubjectifications, since it is no longer possible to speak of a subject in the strict sense. First of all there is the psychosomatic individual Fernando Pessoa, who approaches his desk on March 3, 1914 to write. With respect to this subject, the poetic act can only imply a radical desubjectification, which coincides with the subjectification of Alberto Caieiro. But a new poetic consciousness, something like a genuine ethos of poetry, begins once Fernando Pessoa, having survived his own

depersonalization, returns to a self who both is and is no longer the first subject. Then he understands that he must react to his non-existence as Alherito Caeiro, that he must respond to his own desubjectification. (AGAMBEN, 1999, p. 117)

Thus heteronym should be seen as a simple literary trick, but as an authentic poetic-philosophical exercise. As a poetic process, it leads to a decentering of the subject of the experience, who then starts to understand himself through difference since he sees the flourishing of the other in himself as a condition for his own experience. This can be understood as a way of knowing oneself by being other, or “consciously unknowing oneself” (PESSOA, 1999, p. 165), since the decentering of the self in favor of the development of the other produces unexpected experiences and makes him find in himself that which was not immediately himself. Pessoa describes this experience in the following way:

I don't know who I am, what soul I have. When I talk with sincerity I do not know with what sincerity I speak. I'm variably other than a self that I am not sure exists (if it is these others). I feel beliefs I do not have. Eagerness of joy that I repudiate. My perpetual attention over myself perpetually shows betrayals of the soul to a character I may not have, neither does she think that I have (PESSOA, 1990a, p. 41).

By putting the egocentric existence in doubt, as if the self was only the stage for the development of the existence of the world and of others, the poet continues: “I feel like living the lives of others, in myself, incompletely, as if my being participated in all men, incompletely[?] from each, for a sum of non-selves that are synthesized in a fake self” (PESSOA, 1990a, p. 41).

Thus disquiet appears in the work of Pessoa as a constitutive and destabilizing element since it curtails permanence and stimulates the creative development of heteronym. In this way the creative experiences of his writings are marked by a sort of game between disquiet and plurality in which one sustains and suspends the other, so that the former operates as absence while the latter as excess. It is the encounter between an absence that does not let be fulfilled and an excess that can not do anything but overflow. Such a disconcerting situation is the pulsating heart of the Pessoaan universe, where, besides its character of suspension, the meaning and originality of disquiet seems to be in its constant and infinite capacity to enlarge the horizon of its creations, its experiences as well as its reflections; in sum, it leads to an unlimited space for reflection and the expression of the plural aspects of Being. For better or worse, in the misery

of incompleteness or in the joy of multiplicity, stimulated by disquiet, “we never realize ourselves. We are two abysses - a well staring at the sky” (PESSOA, 1999, p. 54).

IV.

Considering the poetic-philosophical experiences of Fernando Pessoa, we thus know that his work can not be classified according to the traditional split between the philosophical and poetic uses of language, as if the affiliation to one of these discourses eliminated the other. However, he is not the only one to extrapolate this division; the writings of his heteronyms also did this. Among them, Alberto Caeiro is marked by the plenitude of his existence. In the words of Octavio Paz:

Caeiro is the sun and around him we find Reis, Campos, and Pessoa himself. In all of them we find particles of negation or irreality: Reis believes in form, Campos in sensation, Pessoa in symbols. Caeiro believes in nothing: he exists. (...) Caeiro is everything Pessoa is not, and, moreover, everything that no modern poet can be: a man reconciled with nature. Before Christianity, yes, but also before work and history. Caeiro denies, for the simple fact of existing, not only the symbolist aesthetics of Pessoa but also all aesthetics, all values, all ideas. Does anything remain? Everything remains, free from all ghosts and spider webs of culture. (PAZ, 1976, p. 209)

When reflecting about the changes produced by the influence of Caeiro, which operated as a “vaccine against the stupidity of the wise ones” (PESSOA, 2012, p. 103), in Ricardo Reis, in orthonym Fernando Pessoa, in Antônio Mora and on himself, the engineer and poet Álvaro de Campos writes about the centrality of the master on the Pessoa universe:

Around my master Caeiro there were, as one can see in these pages, three main figures - Ricardo Reis, Antônio Mora, and myself. I'm not doing a favor to anyone, not even to myself, when I say that we were, and still are, three absolutely different individuals (...). And all three of us owe the best of the soul that we have to our contact with master Caeiro. All of us are others - that is, we are truly ourselves - since we were trespassed by that the harbinger of that carnal intervention of the Gods (PESSOA, 1990b, p. 369)

On the reaction of Pessoa to his master, Campos is sensitive to the characteristic disintegration of the Pessoa identity: “Most curious is the case of Fernando Pessoa, who does not exist, properly speaking”. According to the engineer-poet, Pessoa could only reach his own individuality - only temporarily - through poems written in reaction to Caeiro. “In a moment,

one only moment, he manages to have his individuality - the one he did not have before nor will have again, because he does not have it” (PESSOA, 2012, p. 102).

In a letter to Casais Monteiro, Pessoa himself recognizes that:

And what followed was the appearance of someone in me, to whom I quickly gave the name of Alberto Caeiro. Sorry for the absurdity of this sentence: my master appeared in me. That was the immediate sensation I had. Such was the case that after writing these thirty something poems, I immediately got another piece of paper and wrote, also, the six poems that form *Oblique Rain*, by Fernando Pessoa. Immediately and totally... it was the return of Fernando Pessoa Alberto Caeiro to Fernando Pessoa alone. Or better saying, it was Fernando Pessoa's reaction against his inexistence as Alberto Caeiro (PESSOA, 1990a, p. 52)

The heteronym master was for his disciples, therefore, what the originary world is for philosophy; that natural, pre-human, naive, primordial thing, to which we look in search for some knowledge about it and ourselves.

But, after all, what can the writings of Alberto Caeiro teach us and why does Renaud Barbaras see in his poems the making of the *non-philosophy* defended by Merleau-Ponty?

After reflecting about the difficulties of Merleau-Ponty with language in his effort to explore all aspects of the Being, and considering the need for philosophy to move beyond its own limits to explore the world that precedes it and on which it is based, Barbaras writes about how the work of Pessoa offers an alternative to these limits, and see in the Caerian poems the creation of a non-philosophy in practice:

The poetic works of Fernando Pessoa under the name of Alberto Caeiro is the most important realization of this idea of literature as the pure expression of the total existence of the world, and that, therefore, it is the realization of non-philosophy itself. From this follows that it must be located beyond the distinction between art and metaphysics, in a way that the alternative offered Merleau-Ponty loses all its meaning. The work of Alberto Caiero is indistinguishably poetry and thought, and therefore it is an absolute unity of the creation and the reflection about the meaning of creation. From this point of view, it would need to abandon the categories that we are using, since it is simultaneously poetry and ontology, and not philosophy, nor poetry: it is probably the first achievement of literature in the new meaning of an “inscription of the Being” (BARBARAS, 2011, p. 219)

Still according to Barbaras, by presenting the world as pure existence, the work of Caeiro overcomes the difficulties presented by language in the philosophical discourse: “we

can distinguish three different levels in this expression of pure existence: a thematization of impotence of thought in relation to the thing; a determination of Being as pure exteriority and, therefore, a critique to interiority; in sum, a tautology leading to a radical reduction of all categories (BARBARAS, 2011, p. 221). With these considerations in mind, we should now look at who Alberto Caeiro is and what his work can tell us.

We know that the heteronym master refuses “to see more in the things than the things themselves” (ZENITH, 2005, p. 211). This refusal actually extends to his own existence, as shown in the verses that open the present essay: “Blessed be myself for everything that I don’t know./ All this is what I truly am”. By radically separating being from knowledge, Caeiro seeks to eliminate everything that does not correspond to his actual and pure existence; to get rid of all projections that come from his conscience in order to fully coincide with his pure existence: “That is the only mission in the world:/ To exist clearly,/ And to do so without thinking about it.” (PESSOA, 1998, p. 59). Through this upside down characterization, in which negativity is capable of making an affirmative physiognomy, the heteronym master denies that which the exercise of knowledge can formulate about his being, in order to strongly affirm the singular and immediate plenitude of his existence. Caeiro is what he is! Indeed, in one of his poems he says: “This is my discovery every day./ Each thing is what it is,/ And it is difficult to explain to someone how happy this makes me,/ And how much this is enough for me./ It suffices to exist in order to be complete” (PESSOA, 2005, p. 91). In this sense Barbaras argues that:

There is in Pessoa [Caeiro] a unique effort to express the thing as pure presence/ excluding signification: ‘... to be one thing is to mean nothing./ To be one thing is to be incapable of interpretation.’ A very important verse: he does not only say that things do not mean anything, but also that the being itself of the thing is based on excluding signification. From this follows the second sentence, that must also be positively interpreted: the thing excludes interpretation not only because of the lack of signification, but also because of the excess of presence: there is a fascination and saturation of presence that does not leave room for interpretation” (BARBARAS, 2011, p. 223).

Besides revealing the disposition of his existence, such a position reflects his critical stance on the knowledge of the intellect. As the *Argonaut of true sensations*, the heteronym master sees himself responsible for unveiling the world and, through a processes of learning to unlearn, develop a critique of the abstract categories of philosophy and the generalizing exercise of thought, in an example of the connection of his existence with feeling and reconstituting the

authenticity of the Universe. Here is how he describes his movement:

I try to shed what I've learned,/ I try to forget the way I was taught to remember,/ To scrape off the paint that was painted on my senses,/ To uncrate my true emotions,/ To step out of all my wrapping and be myself—not Alberto Caeiro/ But a human animal created by Nature./ That's how I write, wanting to feel Nature not even as a man/ But merely as someone who feels Nature./ (...) I'm the Argonaut of true sensations./ I bring to the Universe a new Universe,/ Because I bring to the Universe its own self. (PESSOA, 2006, p. 43)

In a world in which the skills of the intellect are continuously valued, the work of Caeiro is striking precisely for opposing the abstract sophistication of thought, which is considered an indirect and imperfect form of contact with the world in his poems, a disease that distorts sensations: “The world wasn't made for us to think about it/ (To think is to have eyes that aren't well)/ But to look at it and to be in agreement.” (PESSOA, 1998, p. 48).

In the same way that it “is enough to exist in order to be complete”, it is enough to think in order to be incomplete. “The mind transfigures and unrealizes the World in itself” (COELHO, A. P. 1971, p. 290). By creating abstractions about the existence, the thought unrealizes the real and tries to understand it, make it, create it with its reflections, but what is thought is not what is lived, thus the effort to compensate for the existence will always be a frustrating enterprise. In other words, for Caeiro knowledge acts by generalizing the plurality of existence, since he gathers the perceptive profiles in search for a meaning and in this way projects our subjectivity on existence; direct sensations in turn are highly sensitive to the singularity of the plurality of existence: “I look and the things exist./ I think and only I exist (PESSOA, 2005, p. 107). To stop corresponding to what one is, to distort real existence (of oneself as well as of things), to get lost in abstractions: this is the disease that the intellect spreads and the *Argonaut of true sensations* denounces.

It is clear that senses occupy pride of place in the poems of Caeiro. While sensory experiences are considered the most spontaneous and direct form of contact with phenomena, thinking is seen as an abstraction of those, a distortion of sensations. However, thought is not neglected⁶, neither is this sensory experience spontaneously reached. “What Caeiro seeks to

⁶ By comparing the Zen experience to its Caerian counterpart, Leyla Perrone-Moisés also argues that the master does

repeatedly reject is not thought in toto, but the speculative and transcendental use of thought” (SILVA, L. 1985, p. 19). His “true sensations” are not simply sensations. Reaching them demands the debugging of the senses, an effort that depends on a critical reflection of knowledge, of reflection itself, and of the influences that can shape sensations, a redefinition of subjectivity, or of the self, a reconstruction of the relationship of this self with phenomena, and, finally, a new understanding of the Universe. These changes do not exclude the exercise of thought, but just like sensations are not mere sensations, the proper way of thinking in the Caerian universe is not synonymous with the usual forms of thought. This is a kind of thought that should be capable to suspend itself in favor of sensations, which is why the master can say: “I think about this not as one who thinks but as one who doesn’t” (PESSOA, 2006, p. 38).

Thus the relationship that our poet of nature establishes with thought is not only one of indisposition or instrumentalization for a critique. As a keeper conducting his sheep, he guides and also operates a sort of renewal of thought, in a movement that gives characteristics to thought other than its exercise of abstraction. In fact we can read in his verses: “I’m a keeper of sheep./ The sheep are my thoughts/ And each thought a sensation./ I think with my eyes and my ears/ And with my hands and feet/ And with my nose and mouth.” (PESSOA, 1998, p. 52).

Besides the abstract-cognitive function, that distorts, and the critical-negative function, that seeks to guide thoughts, we can identify another form of thought in the Caerian work. This is the materialization of thought. Through a reconciliation with reality, the poet is capable of externalizing sensations that are usually thought as subjective and abstract, but that can in fact have its existence ensured and configured by the material world, such as the tranquility of a look: “My gaze, blue like the sky,/ Is calm like water in the sunlight.” (PESSOA, 1998, p. 56). If we can talk of the experience of looking or its tranquility, this is because we experience its existence in contact with the exterior world. In the meantime, the discomfort that comes with thought can be felt to the extent that it can perhaps be tangible: “Thinking is a discomfort, like walking in the rain/ When the wind kicks up and it seems to rain harder.” (PESSOA, 1998, p. 45). Instead of thinking about sensations, Caetano feels the thought. This is part of his effort to rescue the direct existence of things through a radical exteriorization.

not fully abandon thought: “neither Zen, nor Caetano, by refusing intellectualism and promoting sensory knowledge believe that men should be only instincts. The nature of the human animal is to have this body-mind capable of a knowledge that is simultaneously physical and “spiritual”. What is denied is analytical thought and what is celebrated is a synthetic thought, also exclusive to men” (PERRONE-MOISÉS. 1982, p. 124)

The resource used by the poet does not correspond to the use of symbolisms, nor metaphors,⁷ but the effort to make us physically feel that which we usually think of as abstract. By admitting the precedence of existence and, consequently, radically privileging the sensible, Caeiro is capable of re-encountering the concrete meaning of what we rationally considered to be intangible. This aspect of his poetry is so characteristic and meaningful that appears even in the perception he has of himself as a poet:

When I sit down to write verses/ Or I walk along roads and pathways/ Jotting
verses on a piece of paper in my mind,/ I feel a staff in my hand/ And see my
own profile/ On top of a low hill/ Looking after my flock and seeing my ideas,/
Or looking after my ideas and seeing my flock (PESSOA, 1998, p. 46).

Thinking not as one who thinks, but as one who feels, as the keeper of sensations, the interest of our poet focuses on re-encountering the sensations that were stolen by abstract thought in order to materialize, singularize, and externalize them again. What matters to him is to live the real; abstractions are only a distortion of reality.

Alberto Caeiro is aware that reality is indifferent to his thought, since “Reality is just real, not something thought.” (PESSOA, 1998, p. 80); for him, it is better to enjoy it than to waste time thinking about it. The Caerian position can be interpreted as an allusion to the naivety of those who let be guided by the act of feeling and, especially, as a reference to the autonomy of the real, which does not depend on any human interference in order to exist. This position is the opposite of anthropocentrism since it decenters the role of reflective man in the management of reality, which will then be only fully experienced through the spontaneous relation that is established with our senses, the primordial form of human contact with reality. According to Jacinto do Prado Coelho, “Caeiro leaves himself to the things; in his way of thinking about things the object dominates” (COELHO. 1977, p. 38). Similarly to the Caerian existence, and denouncing a possible limitation of dichotomous metaphysics, Pessoa writes in one of his philosophical texts: “The subject when thought as subject is object” (PESSOA. 2006b,

⁷ Caeiro in fact is against the act of comparing or using metaphors, as we can see in one of his poems: “Mas para que me comparo com uma flor, se eu sou eu/ E a flor é a flor?/ Ah, não comparemos coisa nenhuma, olhemos./ Deixemos análises, metáforas, símiles” (PESSOA, 2005, p. 130). Nos versos seqüentes, ele explica o porquê: “Comparar uma coisa com outra é esquecer essa coisa. /Nenhuma coisa lembra outra se repararmos para ela./ Cada coisa só lembra o que é/ E só é o que nada mais é./ Separa-a de todas as outras o abismo de ser ela./ (E as outras não serem ela.)/ Tudo é nada sem outra coisa que não é” (PESSOA, 2005, p. 130).

p. 46).

Caeiro always privileges the direct, actual, and real existence instead of the products of conscience, which are indirect and abstract, a later generalization of the sensory experience. The exercise of consciousness and of man as a wise being are far from occupying any privileged position in his work:

What? I'm worth more than a flower/ Because she does not know that she has a color and I know/ Because she does not know that she has a perfume and I know/ Because she does not know about me but I know about her?/ But what does one thing have to do with the other/ in order to be superior or inferior to her? Yes, I know about the plant and she does not know about me./ But if the form of consciousness is to have conscience, what about it?/ The plant, if it talked, could tell me: what about your perfume!/ It could tell me: you have conscience because having conscience is a human quality/ And I don't have conscience because I am flower, not man./ I have perfume and you do not, because I am flower... (PESSOA. 2005, p. 130)

If, on the one hand, Caeiro does not deny the existence of conscience as a human characteristic, on the other hand, he refuses to give it any major role in the activity or its products, abstaining himself from using it as usual in the so conscious modern man: "Because being conscious doesn't oblige me to have theories about things;/ It only obliges me to be conscious." (PESSOA, 2006, p. 78). This does not mean that the poet considers human sensory experience as unequivocal and universal, but that he recognizes this as the direct and first form that given us to experience reality in all its multiplicity and difference, that is, in the way it is originally presented to us.

Unlike conscience, corporality in the Caerian work can be seen in a direct connection to reality. Refusing to think of the body as a simple group of functions - in which conscience would play the role of unveiling the impressions captured by this sensory apparatus, managed by an independent, suprasensible, and inexpressible soul - the poet considers the body as the correlate of our existence. We only know that we exist because our body is a thing, matter like all other things; it can feel and be felt among the other things that exist. Thus we read: "I believe in my body more than in my soul,/ Since my body's right here in the midst of reality,/ It can be seen by others,/ It can touch others" (PESSOA, 2006, p. 67).

The relationship of the body to reality will thus be more precise than that of the intellect, because it is direct and sufficient in itself. Based on this the master reinforces his critique of the

fugacity of philosophical reflection and reaffirms the power of the body in face of reality: “Go on, play! Picking up a stone that fits in your hand,/ You know it fits in your hand./ What philosophy can arrive at a greater certainty?/ None. And none can come play outside my door.” (PESSOA, 1998, p. 87).

The exteriority of Caetano is such that at times he wishes to know about his existence only by the reflection of another’s look - the completely material manifestation of the presence of his alterity - and thus exclude any reference to some interiority thought as impalpable and unfathomable: “I wish I had time and peace enough/ To not think about anything,/ To not feel me living,/ To only know of myself in the eyes of others, reflected” (PESSOA, 2005, p.108).

The radicality of the Caerian experience allows the shepherd poet to reconfigure various familiar notions of traditional philosophy, making them closer to his practice of externalization in order to show the direct existence of things. In traditional terms, for example, the soul - as something abstract, suprasensible, that inhabits our interior and from there manages our body - is despised or even the object of attacks for the poet. However, the theme of the soul is not only a object of discordance in his poems; he will try to build a physiognomy for the soul, one that is different from its conventional counterpart and closer to his explicit experience: “The perfect soul is the one that never appears:/ The soul that’s made out of body,/ The absolute body of things,/ Existing — absolutely real—without shadows or errors,/ The exact and entire coincidence of a thing with itself.” (PESSOA, 1998, p.89). In other words, the (non-conventional) soul is considered by him to be in total connection with the body, without any distance or separation between them. Ultimately it is nothing but the body itself.

The notion of interior and exterior domains will equally be reconfigured. Thought is usually thought as an interior process. Since it is not sensible, everything that is uncertain, indirect, and abstract has some kind of relationship to interiority to the shepherd poet. Ultimately, however, the existence of interiority is doubtful since everything that is in the interior, as well as the idea of interiority itself, only corresponds to some form of distortion of external reality:

Being real means not being inside myself./ My inner self doesn’t have any reality I can conceive of./ I know the world exists, but I don’t know if I do./ I’m more certain of the existence of my white house/ Than of the inner existence of the white house’s owner./ I believe in my body more than in my soul,/ Since my body’s right here in the midst of reality/ (...) Whereas my soul

can't be defined except by outer terms./ It exists for me—in the moments when I think it exists—/ By borrowing from the World's outer reality (PESSOA, 2006, p. 67)

By operating an inversion of the Cartesian cogito, whose famous maxim *Cogito, ergo, sum* suggests that the interiority is the most reliable correlate of our real existence, Caetano not only questions his internal content, but also argues that the notion of the existence of interiority - if it exists - is only possible because of external terms. In one of the definitions that the poet offers of himself, his relationship to the white house in which he lives is revealing: “I live on top of a hill/ In a solitary, whitewashed house,/ And that is my definition.” (PESSOA, 2006, p. 33). Barbaras also thinks the Caetano exteriority as an inversion of the Cartesian cogito:

Pessoa manages here to make a radical inversion of Cartesian cogito: I am absolutely certain of external existence, but I am not certain of my existence and, like in Descartes thought or reflection was the model of all evidence, in Pessoa the perception of exteriority is the model of any evidence. If “being real means not being inside myself”, it is for having an internal dimension that signification and interpretation must be rejected. It is through a reduction or negation of my interiority in turn that I can reach the presence of things. (...) But this does not mean that interiority and, therefore, interpretation is an obstacle to the access to things: Pessoa means that there is no interiority, that it only has the reality of an illusion, thus that the meaning of being is univocal (BARBARAS, 2011, p. 224).

In a challenge to the oracle of Delphi - which offers interior wisdom as something preponderant for man with the famous maxim “know thyself” - his refusal to define himself by the knowledge of himself, by internal terms, is justified in the following verses: “I do not know what is to know myself. I do not look inside./ I do not believe that I exist behind myself” (PESSOA, 2005, p. 147).

Experience always precedes consciousness, exteriority always precedes interiority. “The radical position of Pessoa [Caetano] about presence is based on the discovery of the absolute primacy of exteriority” (BARBARAS, 2011, p. 223). Besides the effort to clear up the meanings of the accumulation of superfluous knowledge, in search for a direct experience of reality, the shepherd master also operates a sort of externalization of his existence through his poems, in a prominent process that partly characterizes the propaedeutics of his work. About this movement, Barbaras writes that:

It is not just exteriority as a determination of what exists outside me (a superficial definition in any case since there is not, strictly speaking,

interiority), neither of the space, in opposition to conscience, but of exteriority as a mode of being, as if excluding any form of intimacy. (...) Consequently, if being a thing is to be immune to interpretation, it is not simply because our interiority, necessarily involved in interpretation, is an obstacle to the recognition of exteriority as such, but also because things do not have any hidden or intimate meaning that can justify an interpretation. The critique of philosophy and thought is a consequence of the determination of Being as absolute exteriority (BARBARAS, 2011, p. 225).

If reality for Caeiro, on the one hand, is what it is, then questioning it is a mistake and a waste of time. On the other hand, questioning who questions reality is a permanent exercise in his mission to unveil the experience of the real. Thus he questions: “If the soul is more real/
Than the outer world, as you, philosopher, say it is,/ Then why was the outer world given to me
as reality’s prototype?/ If my feeling is more certain/
Than the existence of the thing I feel,/ Then why do I feel that thing (?)” (PESSOA, 2006, p. 67).

In this poem his questions can be targeted not only at the theories of the “philosopher”, but also at the poet himself (who in his way is also a philosopher, or even better, philosophical). When realizing this possibility, however, he quickly says: “But why all these questions, unless it’s because I’m sick?” (PESSOA, 2006, p. 68). He then concludes:

On the outer and therefore right days of my life,/ On the days when I’m
perfectly, naturally lucid,/ I feel without feeling that I feel,/ I see without
knowing that I see,/ And the Universe is never so real as then,/ The Universe
is never (it’s not near or far from me/ But) so sublimely not-mine. (PESSOA,
2006, p. 68)

Although seeking to unveil existence, Caeiro know that his discussion of the senses and reality can still flirt, at some moments, with forms of conscience since they come from reflections. In a direct and full connection to reality, for example, he would not even mention senses: “Ah, our senses, such sick observers and listeners!/ Were we as we should be,/ We wouldn’t need any illusions.../ It would be enough for us to feel with clarity and life,/ Without even noticing what the senses are for..” (PESSOA, 2006, p. 39). Senses do not exist autonomously, as a faculty that is independent from the body and things; to feel is a generalizing name that we give to the instant, always odd, in which reality meets the body. Thus we can not abstract the notion of feeling, separating it from the experience of things that stimulate the senses.

The “notice for there are senses” come later, much later after feeling. The “we notice for there are senses” creates the so-called “organs of the senses” and these are late, in other words, considered after the immediate feeling, they present themselves as later lucubrations and abstract interpretations or objectivations of the act of feeling, or better saying, of the acts of feeling. For this reason, for being late and already a symbolization of the act of feeling, the senses - meaning “organs of the senses” in the objectivation and scientific thematization, for example, in physiology, in neurology - are “the sick who see and hear”. (FOGEL, 2012, p. 126)

The heteronym in question does not ignore that the difficulties to be completely direct in his arguments about existence come to some extent from the limitations of the language of men: “If I sometimes speak of her as a person/ It’s because I can only speak of her by using the language of men,/ Which imposes names on things/ And gives them personality./ But things have no name or personality:/ They just are” (PESSOA, 2006, p. 30). As a sort of translator, he explores the way men talk about things in order to show and make things accessible themselves through his poetry. Thus his engagement with language oscillates because, although using a less direct form, which is more accessible to the intellectual efforts of indirect men, this use will be regulated and transformed in a way that is sensitive to reality, more direct, and born from how the poet look at things: “This may sound ridiculous to those who,/ Because they aren’t used to looking at things,/ Can’t understand a man who speaks of them/ In the way that looking at things teaches.” (PESSOA, 1998, p. 50).

In the conclusion of his essay *O arco e o cesto*, the anthropologist Pierre Clastres reflects on how the relationship of the indigenous Guayakis/Aché with language differs from the uses of the so-called “civilized,” white men:

the naive discourse of savages obliges us to reflect on the thing that poets and thinkers alone remember: that language is not simply an instrument, that man can be on a level with it, and that the modern West loses the sense of its value through the excessive wear it subjects it to. The language of civilized man has become completely external to him, for it is no longer anything for him but a pure means of communication and information (CLASTRES, 1989, p. 127).

The goal of the present work is not to compare Caerian and Amerindian thought, but the similarities between the way some indigenous groups see the world and Caeiro (a heteronym that is characterized by his originary link to the world) are striking. In *The Falling Sky*, for example, when talking about the existence of the white man and his relationship with the world,

the yanomami shaman Kopenawa frequently refers to a thought that got lost, obscured because it distanced itself from the concrete existence of things:

In the beginning the first white people's land looked like ours. It was a land where they were as few as we are now in our forest. Yet little by little their thought strayed onto a dark and tangled path.(...)By wanting to possess all this merchandise, they were seized by a limitless desire.³ Their thought was filled with smoke and invaded by night. It closed itself to other things. It was with these words of merchandise that the white people started cutting all the trees, mistreating the land, and soiling the watercourses. (KOPENAWA e ALBERT, 2013, p. 326)

Both Kopenawa and Caeiro refer to the thought of civilized men as a thought that distanced itself from the real world and got lost in abstractions. And these are not the only coincidences: the way Kopenawa expresses the exercise of thought, materializing it as the sensation of real things (*a dark and entangled trail*) also resembles the way Caeiro feels and materializes thought; (*thinking bothers like walking in the rain*).

Enmeshed in information and knowledge that have been accumulated over millennia, man unlearned how to look directly and disinterestedly at things. As a consequence, his language got disconnected from reality, tending to focus more on thoughts that give meaning to things than on things themselves. According to Caeiro, when considering the expressiveness of things, there is no distinction between their way of being and the appropriate language for them. In other words, if being is the direct language of things, this language is not a language at all but the things themselves. Thus there is no need for indirect allusions, reflections, symbolism, or meanings to get closer to reality, one only needs to look at it. In order to unmount and clear up the meanings of men that the poet uses their language (and at times may use its abstract devices). Such a conscious strategy aims at communicating to these men their mistakes and teach them how to unlearn everything they learned in order to show them the unveiled and true world:

If sometimes I say that flowers smile/ And if I should say that rivers sing,/ It's not because I think there are smiles in flowers/ And songs in the rivers' flowing.../ It's so I can help misguided men/ Feel the truly real existence of flowers and rivers./ Since I write for them to read me, I sometimes stoop/ To the stupidity of their senses.../ It isn't right, but I excuse myself,/ Because I've only taken on this odious role, an interpreter of Nature,/ Because there are men who don't grasp its language,/ Which is no language at all. (PESSOA, 2006, p. 34)

The relation between Caeiro and language reveals another aspect of his work as shepherd and his vocation to be the master: the reconduction of false men to the path of true sensations and towards reality. The shepherd exemplifies the kind of mistake of these men, who try to generalize, abstract, or idealize the experience of reality:

But what is a row of trees? There are just trees./ “Row” and the plural “trees” are names, not things./ Unhappy human beings, who put everything in order,/ Draw lines from thing to thing,/ Place labels with names on absolutely real trees,/ And plot parallels of latitude and longitude/ On the innocent earth itself, which is so much greener and full of flowers!⁸ (PESSOA, 2006, p. 41)

The engagement with language might be indirect, like that of false men, or revealing, as it is the case with the master. However, the latter would never idealize a perfect language for himself since this is something related to those who think too much. He naturally accepts his limitations, such as those of human language, as something we must deal with, but without forgetting that they are limitations: “I think and write the way flowers have color,/ But how I express myself is less perfect,/ For I lack the divine simplicity/ Of being only my outer self.” (PESSOA, 2006, p. 25). In the domain of language, his position of acceptance thus appears again without ignoring that language is a natural outcome of men: “If I was born to speak, then I have to speak a language” (PESSOA, 2005, p. 148). He accepts his own changes of course as a consequence of such a condition.

On the possibility of a more direct use of language, the shepherd poet frequently uses tautologies and thematic repetitions. He explains:

The one who heard my verses told me: what is new here?/ Everybody know that a flower is a flower and that a tree is a tree./ But I replied: not all of them, nobody./ Because everyone loves flowers for being beautiful, and I am different./ And everybody loves trees for being green and giving us shade, but I do not./ I love flowers for being flowers, directly./ I love trees for being trees, without my thought (PESSOA, 2005, p. 128).

⁸ As discussed earlier, our goal here is not to fully compare the experiences of Caeiro and Amerindian peoples, but the resemblance is striking. Kopenawa also mentions the practice of white men to cover with meaningless lines the land, reducing it to maps: “We use our words this way to say that the ancient white people once drew their land to cut it up. First they covered it in crisscrossing lines, forming sections in the center of which round spots are painted. This is how the shamans see it. These drawings of lines and dots, like jaguar skin paintings, appear to make it more beautiful. Yet afterward they are glued in a book and those who want to plant their food on these parcels must then give back their value.” (KOPENAWA e ALBERT, 2013, p. 254)

The use of thematic repetition also reinforces an argument that the shepherd of sensations recurrently emphasizes in his poems: thoughts interfere in the vision of men, stopping them from seeing reality and making them focus on projections that do not correspond to reality but to human conscience. In the words of Brandão:

[It is] a slow work of deconstruction of the ideological apparatus responsible for the creation of being. Because of this he repeats many times the same motif, in its rational, metaphysical, religious, mystical: ‘I don’t have philosophy’; ‘There is enough metaphysics in not thinking about anything’; ‘Thinking about God is to disobey God’; ‘You, mystic, sees a signification in all things’ (BRANDÃO, s/d, p. 271).

Tautology works not only as an affirmative imperative of the singularity of existence, but also as a strategy to protect the particularities of each thing, freeing them from the subterfuge of attributing meanings. According to Renaud Barbaras,

This tautology takes various forms, somewhat negative, because its function is not only to affirm the presence; it is, when saying the identity of the thing with itself, to contain the temptation of interpretation or evocation, in other words, to avoid the permanent risk of understanding the thing as something more than it is (BARBARAS, 2011, p. 225).

Still on the relationship of Caeiro to language we read that: “I try to say what I feel/ Without thinking about what I feel./(...) That’s how I write, sometimes well, sometimes badly,/ Sometimes saying just what I want to say, sometimes getting it wrong” (PESSOA, 2006, p. 43). In his effort to be direct, he tries to be spontaneous, dismissing his indirect thoughts to directly express his sensations. Aware that “Just as words fail us when we try to express a thought,/ So thoughts fail us when we try to express reality, (PESSOA, 1998, p. 81), Caeiro accepts his limitations with the spontaneity of one who knows that this is part of his way of being, without searching for perfection or the connection of his existence to an ideal; he remains within reality.

Exploring all the consequences of Caeiro’s position is beyond the limits of the present essay, but we can nonetheless note that his experiences that privilege his immediate existence in its absolute exteriority, without the influence of the projections of consciousness, express a viable and self-sufficient worldview, as a self-ontology, capable of tackling original philosophical problems in new ways.

V.

Before the singularization of its exercise, and the separation that became entrenched over time, philosophical discourse developed especially through poetic discourse. In the *Odyssey*, for example, facing a universe dominated by incomprehensible and inexorable forces, Ulysses acts rationally, reflecting about his condition in order to circumvent or deal with the inexorable, be it natural or supernatural. We can understand Ulysses as the hero that represents the foreshadowing of the supremacy of reason over the elementary, pre-reflective dimension that precedes it. In the words of Franklin Leopoldo e Silva:

The voyage of Ulysses and all the dangers that he faces would represent, in this case, the constitution of rationality as the privileged instrument through which man will triumph over the enchanted world. The wit of Ulysses would be the first figure of reason and of its role to conquer the irrational, or that which in principle is opposed to it. And his victories can be understood, allegorically, as a demonstration that reason can overcome all obstacles and impose itself as the only criterion of relationship with the world, a criterion that also shows the supremacy of reason. (SILVA, F. L. 2018)

Kant actually considers that the straight relationship between poetry and philosophy was healthy before the latter developed its specific vocabulary⁹: “The first philosophers were poets. There was some time before discovering words for abstract concepts; because of this, initially, supra-sensible thoughts were represented by sensible images [...]. Because of the poverty of language at the time it was only possible to philosophize through poetry (KANT in SUZUKI, 1998, p. 55).

The dominance of reason in the philosophical tradition also emerged through the poetic exercise. It not only offered a background for philosophical reflections, but also provided the discursive apparatus for the development of the philosophical terminology. Kant does argue that this only happened in the early days of philosophy because until then it did not know how to refer to abstract and intellectual experiences. However, if after all this time under the protection of reason, so many things remain beyond the scope of its enlightening impulse (including the nature of reason itself) - and the discursive apparatus that emerged through its exercise seems to be too limited for the philosophical demands that move beyond traditional

⁹ Although recognizing the possibility and advantages for philosophy to explore and reflect on the experiences of poetry, Kant thought unnecessary and even harmful a too close approximation between the two, since philosophy could contaminate the abstract sophistication of its conceptual apparatus with other forms that are more sensitive to language, which do not contribute to the logical form of its discourse.

philosophical boundaries - perhaps it is time for philosophy to look at other forms of experience, as Merleau-Ponty recognized. He recognized this necessity but was incapable of moving in that direction - at least not as far as Fernando Pessoa - because he was still too attached to the traditional forms of philosophical discourse. Thus, like in other times, it is not surprising that a poet - with his flexibility and openness to the world - presented a new horizon for philosophizing.

As we have seen the way poetry deals with philosophy in Pessoa is not restricted to the poetization of philosophical investigations. From the dialogue between these two fields emerge questions and experiences, with hybrid conclusions that are related both to the universe of poetry as to philosophical domains. Although the discussion of experiences in the works of Pessoa has a philosophical background, it is effectively developed in the creative horizon of art. In this horizon, the philosophical exercise is not restricted by the categories and commitments of traditional philosophy anymore. Such an approach allows the Portuguese poet to not only move beyond the traditional domains of philosophy, but also put the possibility of this extrapolation and its consequences as a problem for philosophy itself, a problem that can in turn be again tackled by his poetry. Pessoa inaugurates a way of thinking that demands the creation of specific tools, which is only possible because of this fusion of poetry and philosophy.

In his essay *A philosophical task: being a contemporary of Pessoa*, Alain Badiou defends that: “the singular line of thought developed by Fernando Pessoa is such that none of the figures established in philosophical modernity is able to sustain his tension (BADIOU, 2002, p. 53 e 54). In sum, if Badiou is correct and the poem-thought of Pessoa opens a little explored field that inaugurates a contemporaneity in which the traditional categories of philosophy are insufficient, then it is clear that this novelty is only possible through a connection between the poetic and the philosophical. In fact, on the link between the work of the poet and the philosopher, Fernando Pessoa writes: “There should be no surprise in the fact that one thing is the poet, another one is the philosopher, although they are the same” (PESSOA, 2005, p. 250). According to Barbaras, “Pessoa incarnates one of the directions of our philosophical future and it is because of this that Badiou note that, when we read Pessoa, we quickly become convinced that it is useless to read other books, that everything is in these (BARBARAS, 2011, p. 229).

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